

the King's sergeants, who had orders to take him to prison in Salisbury Castle. But before they had left the doors of the palace, a party of knights, headed by Sir John Holland, took over the charge of the prisoner, led him on to the castle, and carried him down into one of its ancient dungeons. There the miserable man was tortured with all the ingenuity of human wickedness. Such a scene would have passed with little comment in the days of Front de Boeuf, but it shocked the contemporaries of Chaucer. It was said that no servant or page would set his hands to the work, and that the foul deed was done by the gentlemen themselves, one of whom was of royal blood. Although the victim was at last handed over to the governor of the castle, who treated what was left of him with humanity, he died within a few hours. When word was brought to Richard, he sobbed for vexation and pity. Though in the heat of anger he could order deeds of blood, such diabolical and calculating cruelty as this was revolting to his nature. Besides, the death of the friar deprived him of all chance of discovering his uncle's plot. The horrible fate that awaited any man who should accuse John of Gaunt of treason, so appalled the other witness in the case that he was glad to deny all knowledge of the facts. The forcible suppression of the friar's evidence would perhaps be good reason for suspecting that his story was true; but it is noteworthy that those who did the foul deed were not all of them Lancastrians or enemies of the King. The chief of them, Richard's half-brother, Holland, was indeed attached to John of Gaunt ; but others were not. It cannot therefore be said with certainty that John of Gaunt and the nobles opposed to the Crown sent the knights to make away with the friar.¹

The King openly showed that he still suspected the Duke's guilt. This led to another scene. His second uncle, Thomas Woodstock, Earl of Buckingham, burst into his presence, upbraided him for his suspicions, and threatened him in the most violent terms. The bitterness of the quarrel

¹ See Ap.